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ABSTRACT

Like many cities, Indianapolis (Indiana) is facing growing dissatisfaction over its public schools. The Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) system has seen over the past decade decreasing student achievement and increasing problems over student readiness to learn, basic skills, and violence. IPS has responded with a new direction, increased parent involvement, new programs, improved management, and more partnerships. Still, there are many questions left unanswered. This guide presents four different approaches to improving schools. First, schools should identify and make better use of the materials, methods, and conditions that help students learn effectively. Second, community schools should be encouraged in which schooling is a part of a larger learning environment. Schools should be reconnected with communities and serve the greater educational needs of the communities. Third, educational equity should be ensured. A renewed commitment to equity is needed to effectively educate disadvantaged children. Fourth, schools are mediocre because no one is held responsible for achievement. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students must accept responsibility for making schools excellent. (JPT)

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Schools at the crossroads: which way to educational excellence?

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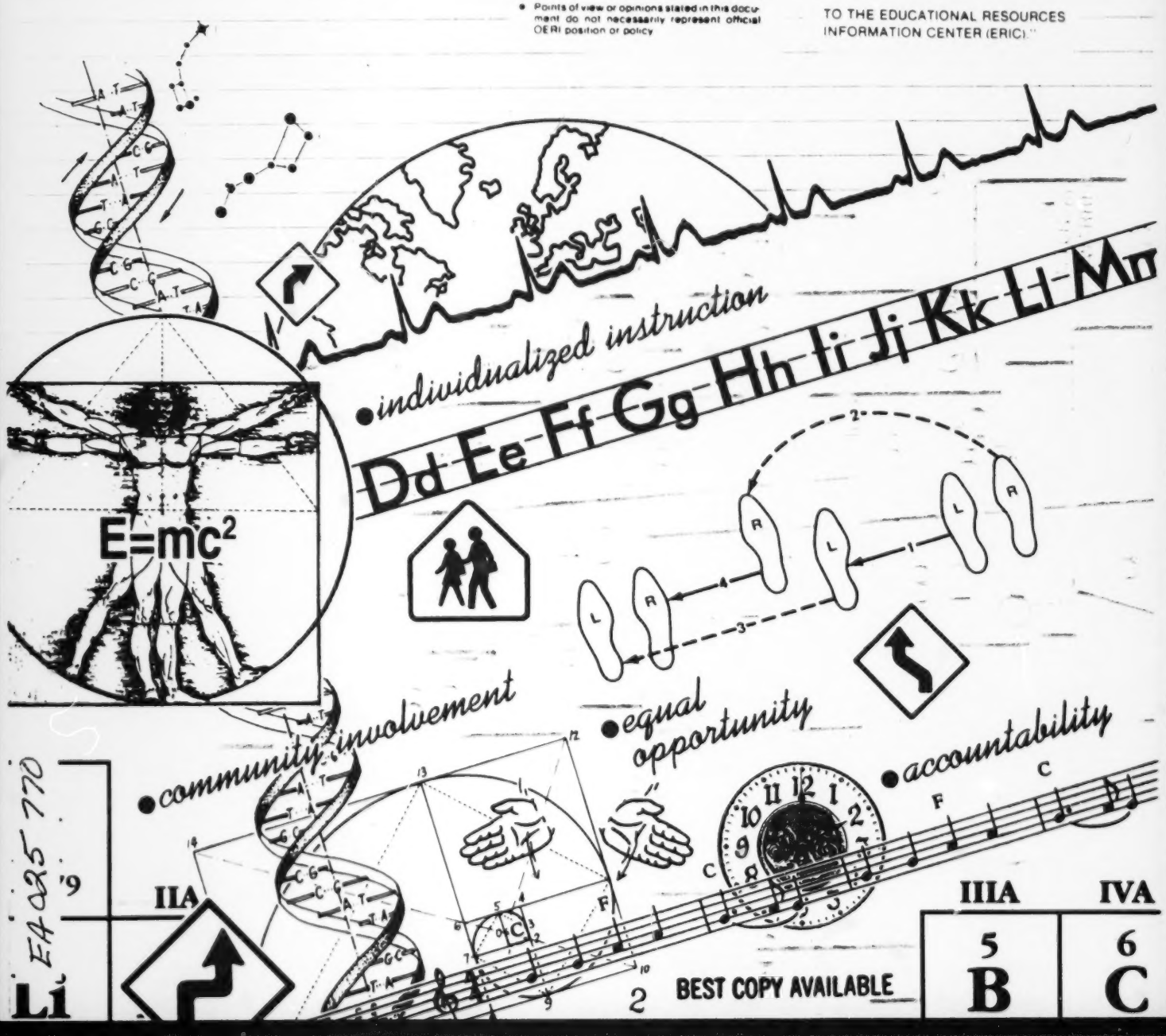

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Schools At the Crossroads: Which Way to Educational Excellence?

PREPARED BY THE INDIANAPOLIS ADULT LITERACY COALITION

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THE EDUCATION DILEMMA: REFORMING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Too many of our kids do not have the skills and knowledge they need to be productive in their lives, on the job and in their communities.

In August of 1981, Secretary of Education T.H. Bell created the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The commission was established in response to what the Secretary noted as "the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system." The task undertaken by the commission was to examine and report on the quality of education in the United States. The report, *A Nation At Risk*, released in 1983, sent shock waves throughout the country. Our schools were found to be mediocre and in urgent need of reform.

Like many other cities across the nation, Indianapolis felt the impact of that initial shock. Ten years later, the city is still struggling with the issue. There has been growing dissatisfaction with our educational institutions. Much of the concern is centered around the lack of excellence in public education. For citizens in Center Township that concern is focused on the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). The view that there are serious problems within IPS is widely held.

In a 1991 *Indianapolis News* article, Maurice Huckleberry shared his dismay over changes he has seen as an economics teacher in the IPS school system. Ten years ago, he stopped giving essay tests to his high school seniors. "I couldn't read them. The students couldn't write, they couldn't spell and they couldn't reason by starting off and concluding a complete thought." More than anything else what troubled him in his last years of teaching was the lack of basic skills. "We were teaching high school seniors who were reading at the fifth grade reading level. A lot of them thought they were college material."

IPS is a system of 68 elementary schools, 11 junior high schools and eight high schools. With a student population in 1992-93 of 46,572, it is the largest school system in the state. As is common for urban school systems of its size, IPS is faced with a number of serious problems. Low student performance is one. In SAT scores, IPS lags behind state and national averages. Even though IPS reported student achievement scores in language and reading that were at or above the national norm in 1991, the system had the lowest test scores in Marion Coun-

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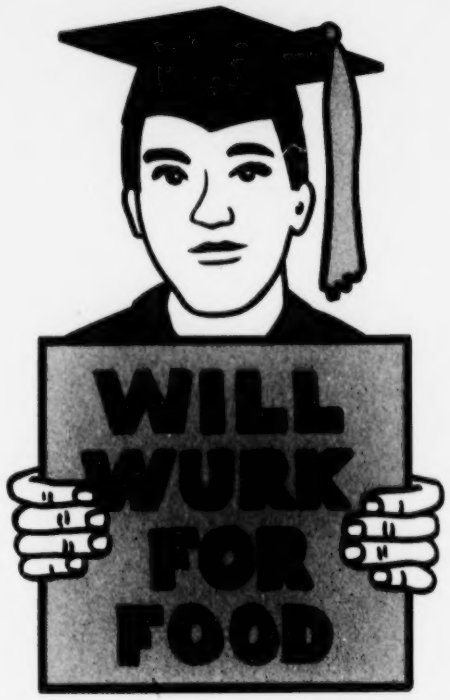
ty on Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) tests. According to the Indiana Department of Education, more than 1,500 IPS students in grades 7-12 dropped out; nearly 6,000 were suspended; 150 were expelled; and over 2,000 students were retained in their grade level during the 1990-91 school year.

Funding is another problem area. At the end of the 1991-92 school year, IPS projected a deficit in its general fund of $27 million. The projection was based on the exhaustion of the cash surplus accumulated since 1985, indications that the General Assembly would not increase state and local revenues for schools and normal budget increases. In response to this impending deficit, reduction measures were implemented -- teachers were laid off and support staff reduced. Equipment purchases were limited, building maintenance projects delayed and programs such as the Outdoor Education Program, which allowed sixth graders to attend outdoor science camp, and summer school were cut as well.

While student performance and funding are major concerns, IPS must also deal with the growing incidence of violence. Safe schools have become a top priority. In the past year, there have been several shootings, drug activity and gang related incidents on or near school grounds. Possession of weapons is increasingly common. Both schools and the community, recognize that violence is a serious threat to education and that security should be emphasized. In an effort to stop the carrying and use of weapons and rid schools of drug and gang activity, IPS now conducts random locker and personal searches using metal detectors and police dogs.

A number of other changes have been initiated to respond to these problems. In 1991, a new superintendent was appointed with a clear mandate to chart a new direction. In the quest to transform IPS into a "world class school system," the new superintendent has convened town meetings, a visioning retreat, and strategic planning committees. Strategies to increase parent involvement, provide innovative educational programs, improve school management and foster school-business partnership are being implemented.



Still there are unresolved concerns. For some there is a sense that they have not been included in making decisions about our schools. Others distrust the changes now championed as school reform. While most people agree that we must improve IPS, there are different views regarding what the problems are and how best to solve them. What the public wants to do about our public schools is unclear. How do we as a community respond to the challenge of achieving quality education in IPS?

If the community is to answer this question, we will have to make some hard choices. To do this, we must talk to each other. We must share our concerns, consider the benefits as well as the disadvantages, weigh the consequences of possible actions to ourselves and others, and look at what we value most. Together we must discover what we as a community want from public education.

This guide can help us find where there is common ground. It presents four different approaches to improving our public schools. The approaches are offered, not as solutions, but as a framework for looking at the problems in our schools and what can be done. The issue of achieving excellence in IPS is complex. A great deal of thought, discussion, and effort will be

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needed. This guide serves as a starting point for thinking and talking together about this concern.

How Do We Respond?

Choice #1: Meet the Needs of Every Student

Our schools should identify and make better use of the materials, methods, and conditions that help each student learn effectively. We need to change how and what we teach.

Choice #2: Encourage Community-Schools

Our public schools are part of a larger learning environment. Schools are tools for building and reinforcing community life. We need to reconnect our schools to their communities and make education serve the needs of our communities.

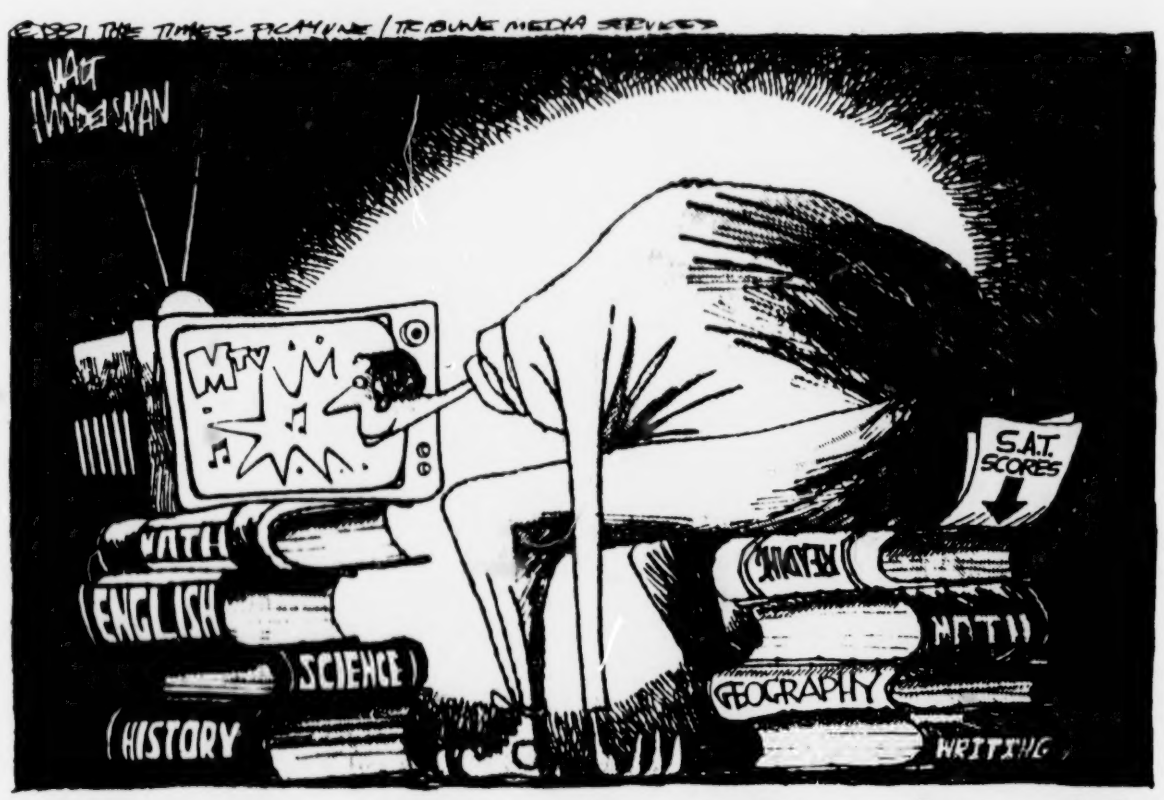
Choice #3: Ensure Educational Equity

The promise of public education is a better future for all children. To effectively educate disadvantaged children we need to renew our commitment to the principle of equity.

Choice #4: Establish Accountability

Our schools are mediocre because we do not hold anyone accountable for creating successful schools. How can we expect quality in the educational system when no one assumes responsibility? Teachers, administrators, parents and students must accept their responsibility for making our schools excellent.

Each of these ways of responding has benefits and costs. Though we may disagree about the best way to address the problems, it is important that we talk about the issue. Through discussion we can begin to identify what we want to do as a community about our schools. Your voice is important. So let's talk.



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Choice #1: Meet the Needs of Every Student

Our schools should identify and make better use of the materials, methods, and conditions that help each student learn effectively. We need to change how and what we teach.

By the time a child graduates from high school he or she will have spent approximately 12,630 hours in the classroom. This does not include time for extra-curricular activities, homework or summer school. Between one-fourth to one-third of a student's life will center around school. Ultimately, what takes place in the learning environment determines the quality of the education a child receives.

Some people believe we need to look more closely at the classroom and school environment, for it is here that instruction occurs. It is here that our schools have failed to meet the needs of all students. Our schools should make better use of the materials and methods that help students to learn effectively and create conditions to maximize individual talents, gifts, and abilities.

Advocates of this view say we must begin by changing the learning environment. If we are to make real improvements in our schools, then we must do a better job of educating every child. By identifying individual learning needs, offering appropriate instruction and providing students with a curriculum of essential knowledge and skills, we can take steps to ensure that every child succeeds in school.

Identifying Learning Needs

Of the 48,024 students in IPS in 1991-92, 5,920 were enrolled in special education classes; 3,266 were recognized as at-risk students; 7,928 were involved in federally funded programs for the disadvantaged; and approximately 3,147 participated in programs for the academically talented. Based on these figures over 40% of IPS students had special learning needs. Some would argue that the rate is higher, citing the number of students who drop out of school, are chronically absent or truant, or have discipline problems.

We need a more systematic approach to identifying student strengths and weaknesses. Currently, only those students who score very high or low on performance tests or those who are referred to special programs receive educational evaluations by IPS' diagnostic teams.

There are inconsistencies in the kinds of services provided as well. In the words of one mother who has both children with disabilities and children who are academically talented, "It's so fragmented you can go from one school to another and get something totally different. There's no consistency throughout the system."

People who favor this approach feel that just as IPS administers performance tests each year to measure student progress, equal emphasis should be placed on assessing learning needs. All students should be evaluated. The evaluations should be conducted by psychologists, social workers, counselors, and educators -- a

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team inclusive of minorities that is knowledgeable of and sensitive to social, cultural and learning differences. Broader methods of assessment that go beyond paper and pencil testing should also be employed to adequately identify diverse abilities.

Utilizing these methods and working closely with parents, learning plans tailored to individual student characteristics could be developed. The plans would guide teachers in providing appropriate instruction. Through periodic parent-student conferences, progress reviews and plan revisions, learning goals for each child would be refined. Schools, like school #37, that follow continuous progress use this approach; however, it is not a system-wide practice. It should be implemented in all schools. In this way, education would be made to serve each child more effectively.

Appropriate Educational Instruction

Not all children learn effectively in the same way and from the same type of instruction. Some children are more visual. Others are auditory learners. Some learn best through hands-on application, while others respond to rhythm or repetition. "Everybody has a learning style," states Rita Dunn in an article featured by *Principal* magazine, May 1981. Ms. Dunn, a professor of education at the Center for the Study of Learning and Teaching Styles at St. John's University in New York, believed as early as 1967 that there was an important relationship between learning styles and academic performance. Over the years, continuing research has corroborated the existence of that relationship. Significant improvement in achievement, motivation and discipline has been observed when students' learning styles are matched with complementary teaching styles or instructional approaches.

Culture also influences how children learn. Janice Hale-Benson, associate professor of early-childhood education, Cleveland State University, addresses this in her book *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture and Learning Styles.* African American children tend to be more active; very expressive in music, dance and drama; use language with flair; learn from people rather than objects; and master skills through real life application. Our schools should acknowledge ethnic and cultural characteristics as elements that affect learning success.

Students at the Key School enjoy play time as part of their learning activities. Through unstructured play, children develop and enhance their creativity. The idea of this activity is for children to learn that use of the imagination is a valuable skill.

The Key School, now 3 years old, is modeled after Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences which supports the learning styles approach to teaching.

In May 1990, the Key School reported that their students ranked seventh among 67 local elementary schools. Higher scores came only from some Montessori schools and schools for the academically talented.

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Supporters of this choice say that all teachers should be trained and skilled in the use of various instructional methods that enable them to teach according to different learning styles and in ways that are culturally sensitive. They feel that the approach to education that places the teacher at the head of the class while students sit quietly at their desks is not working. It may be adequate for some students, but many others are being left out.

Some also say that learning should be more active and that education should engage children in a continuous exploration for knowledge. The role of the teacher should be that of coach. Dr. Theodore Sizer, professor of education at Brown University, is an ardent advocate of active learning. Nineteenth century educators assumed that a child's mind was an empty slate. The notion of schooling as drill comes out of this. The counter assumption, active learning, is the view that children come to school with their own interests and experiences. When the child engages with ideas that are of interest, it is in that process of engagement that the child learns.

Through the Magnet and Options programs, IPS provides some students with innovative instruction and active learning. Those who favor this choice say all students should have this opportunity. The learning style and culture of each child should be viewed as strengths and used to students' educational advantage. This means teaching students in the ways they learn best.

Teachers should have a firm grasp of the knowledge and skills in their subject area. The curricula in schools of education should be changed to emphasize content over methodology. Student-teachers should also engage in field practice earlier. Working with veteran teachers in a variety of classroom settings, they could then develop and refine their teaching methods and techniques. Upon graduation, future teachers would be highly skilled. Subsequent re-certification based on demonstrated mastery of subject matter and creative teaching approaches should be required to ensure that teachers remain competent. The clause in the legislation enacted by the General Assembly in 1986 allowing teachers to retain their lifetime certification should be revoked.

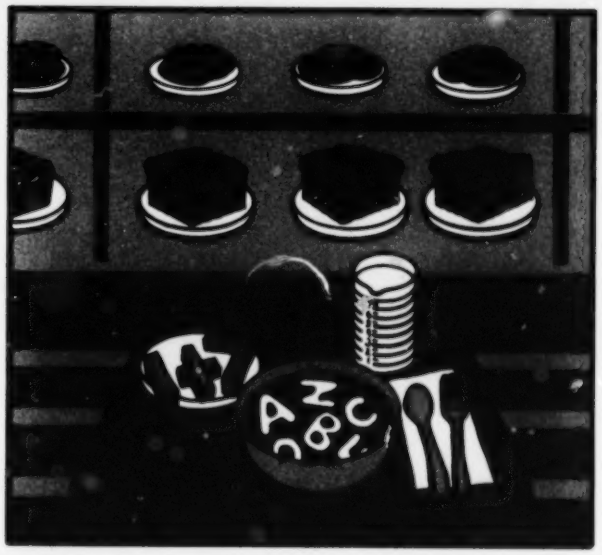
Another way to meet the needs of all students would be to implement alternative teacher certification. This would bring more people with work experience in content areas into the classroom and help students gain an understanding of how the things they learn in school apply to the real world. "I don't think that the only people qualified to teach are those with an education degree," comments David Kerr of COMMIT, a statewide education coalition of business leaders.

Even with these changes, say supporters of this view, unless our schools are given the money to offer teachers higher salaries, our students will not benefit. If we are to attract the best qualified, we must pay teachers more.

Advocates of this choice point out that class size affects teachers' ability to teach. While the average pupil per teacher ratio in IPS is 19 to 1, the actual ratio varies from classroom to classroom and from school to school. In classes where Prime Time, a state funded program to reduce class sizes in grades K-3, has been implemented, class sizes are usually no larger than 17. In other settings, class sizes may be as high as 32-40.

Environments like this increase the potential for discipline problems and force teachers to spend too much time on attendance and classroom control. This, in addition to the paperwork required for local and state administrative purposes, is at the expense of teaching. In the words of one parent, "I see teacher frustration. When you get into large classrooms, teachers get wrapped up in a lot of [other] things. This ends up being the whole teaching process and they never get down to teaching the actual curriculum or being creative."

Supporters of this view feel that our schools should have Prime Time limits in all classes. They see smaller class sizes as essential to making the learning environment more responsive to student needs. They say it will give teachers and students an opportunity to get to know each other. Teachers will have time to individualize instruction and be creative. Smaller class size will reduce discipline problems and make learning more enjoyable.



Consider the educational menu -- what courses will provide children with the essential knowledge and skills they need?

Curriculum

People who believe we should focus on what takes place in the classroom between teacher and student say the primary role of our schools is to give students knowledge and skills. What schools teach -- the body of information that students are to master -- is defined by the curriculum. Because the subject matter taught in schools is central to what students learn, curriculum is being examined. Are schools teaching students what they really need to know?

While the belief that we need to improve the curriculum is widely shared, there are many views as to what this means. Some feel that schools should concentrate on the "basics." Employers say they want more than the 3 R's -- reading, writing and arithmetic -- reports the North Central Indiana Workforce Literacy Task Force. They want students to have "workplace skills" such as communication, problem solving and "life skills." Other segments of the community see multi-culturalism -- knowlege of all people's culture and history as content students should learn. Still others say that schools should teach students how to think; how to organize their lives; how to deal with social issues like sex, drugs, and religion; and how to live in the world with others. Exposure to music, art and the social sciences is important to others.

People who favor this choice say we need to decide what we want our schools to teach. Once we know what we want our children to learn, schools can teach them. Only then will students obtain the knowledge and skills they need to be productive and successful.

What We Should Do

- Implement a systematic process for assessing the learning needs of all students.
- Pay teachers higher salaries so that our schools can attract the most qualified.
- Decide what we want our schools to teach so that students obtain the knowledge and skills they need.
- Require that all teachers be trained and skilled in the use of various methods of instruction that allow them to teach to different learning styles and in ways that are culturally sensitive.
- Hire teachers whose study in schools of education emphasized knowlege of subject matter and a variety of actual student teaching experiences.
- Require that all teachers be certified every five years and that they demonstrate mastery of subject matter and diverse teaching methods.
- Establish alternative teacher certification to bring more teachers with real world experience into the classroom.
- Mandate Prime Time limits for all classes.

What Critics Say

While most would agree that the way a student learns, the atmosphere in which learning takes place and curriculum content are factors that affect learning, critics of this approach say it has some serious flaws.

It is true that the interaction between teacher and student in the learning environment is important, but critics say education is not limited to the school environment or the classroom. The school is part of a community and

what students learn in their community is equally important. In fact, the role of the school should be to help children synthesize learning that occurs in a variety of places. In order to do this, education must be broadened to extend beyond the school into the community.

Efforts to identify the needs of each student to help them learn successfully is a worthwhile goal. However, it also increases the potential for negative consequences. Currently the results of learning diagnosis and placement or separation contributes to labeling and tracking.

Special education is the lowest track. Some consider it a dumping ground for undesirable students. Those who fail ISTEP or have extreme discipline problems are often assigned to special education classes. Here African Americans have disproportionately been the majority. In programs for the academically talented, they are under-represented. The middle track is for "average" kids. Because of this tracking system, many students are pigeonholed into dull, repetitive programs that produce minimum or low-level skills. More labeling and tracking is definitely not the answer.

Others argue that having smaller classes with better qualified teachers is not feasible. The state now provides $79 million a year for Prime Time in grades K-3, but this does not cover all costs. Our schools would have to build more classrooms, hire more teachers and pay salaries that attract high quality educators. Many people feel we should not pay more for our schools until we have better accountability. In the words of one citizen, "I think everyone wants a good education for their children, but taxpayers are at the point where they don't want to foot the bill. I see a taxpayers revolt."

The use of different teaching methods to respond to the learning styles of all students sounds good in theory, but it would require a change in our testing methods. It would be harder to measure what kids actually learn. We may say that we favor more innovative methods, but we still want immediate results.

In many cases, it would take years to determine whether or not these changes improve student performance. Until then, we would be living with uncertainty and gambling with our children's future.

Teacher certification is another area of difficulty. Who would decide what the requirements should be? Will it be the teachers themselves, education theorists, universities, or the community?

Finally, how can teachers know what is expected of them if we can't decide what it is we want kids to know? There's no agreement about what schools should teach. Until there is, our schools will continue to experience failure because they are unclear about their mission. This is a question that we must answer first before we can talk about making real changes in the learning environment.

Our public schools are part of a larger learning environment. Schools are tools for building and reinforcing community life. We need to reconnect our schools to their communities and make education serve the needs of communities.

At one time, schools were among the institutions that made up the heart and soul of their communities. A focal point for community activity, they served to educate the children, bring neighborhoods and families together and provide a vital sense of common identity. Today many people view schools as separate entities disconnected from the community. Education, while becoming more professionalized, has also become more isolated.

Advocates of this choice say the real problem with education stems from the way we see and think of schools. Our public schools are not seen as part of a larger environment where learning occurs nor are they thought of as tools for building and reinforcing community life. The idea of education is too often confined within the walls of schools and its link to the community severed. This attitude, say advocates of this approach, must be changed. To improve education, we will have to reconnect our schools to their communities and make education serve the needs of those communities.

Supporters of this view believe we can no longer afford to allow our schools to operate as educational fortresses. Communities should be involved in every aspect of their schools and schools must reach into their communities. To accomplish this, we should make schools part of our communities' resources, eliminate busing, and increase local control of schools.

Community as defined by Webster's dictionary is "people living in a particular place linked by common interest." For those who advocate this choice, the common interest is the continued improvement in the quality of life that benefits both the individual and the group. The community and all its resources, as advocates see it, exist to help members effectively address the issues of living. Thus, the purpose of education is to aid and assist individuals to live productively within their communities and society. Yet increasingly, parents, businesses,

and communities have come to realize that there is a tremendous gap between what takes place in our schools and what happens in the "real world." Our schools are not part of the community fabric and are not being used in ways that contribute to the life of the community.

Projects like Marshall's Male Mentors, the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce's Partners in Education program, and the Tech Teen Clinic funded by the State Board of Health and the Methodist Tasks Corps are excellent examples of how schools and communities can work together to address community needs. Through the Male Mentor program young African American boys are provided with positive African American male role models. Partners in Education links the world of work with schools involving business in efforts to improve education. The Tech Teen Clinic offers free treatment to youth for a variety physical and emotional problems.

Some supporters of community-oriented schools feel that these efforts should go even further. As they see it, schools should function as total community centers -- places that serve as learning centers, cultural and recreational facilities, and locations for accessing community services.

Our schools should connect students to the world in which they live. If students are to be productive in their communites, they must gain a sense of belonging and see themselves as an integral part of community life. Student involvement in community service or civic activities can help schools accomplish this goal. Through experiences such as visiting the elderly in nursing homes, tutoring younger students or volunteering for a community organization, youth learn to build and develop their communities. They learn that they can contribute in a positive way and it helps prepare them to become productive citizens. This is one of the major purposes of schools. Those who favor this choice would make youth service and citizen participation a part of the IPS curriculum and a requirement for graduation.

Student apprenticeship or intern training programs in community businesses and civic organizations are also needed to give students real world experiences. Programs like these can complement what is taught in schools. Through on-the-job training, students gain a better understanding of the connection between learning and work. Such programs allow students who plan to enter the job market directly after high school to acquire valuable skills and ease the transition from school to work.

The classrooms should provide students with real world experiences. Through more on-the-job training the connection between learning and work can be reinforced.

Exposure to career preparation early in a student's education is another need. Job sampling and field trips to places of employment should begin in junior high school. With continued exposure, a student entering the tenth grade should have a grasp of career opportunities and some ideas about the direction he or she wants to take. High school should increase career development opportunities through such programs as work study, career

counseling or expanded vocational training. Thus at graduation, students would be better prepared to pursue their goals and to function in the real world.

The alienation of youth from their communities, inability of high school graduates to perform well on the job, and lack of sufficient job-training programs for youth are problems that school-community collaborations can address.

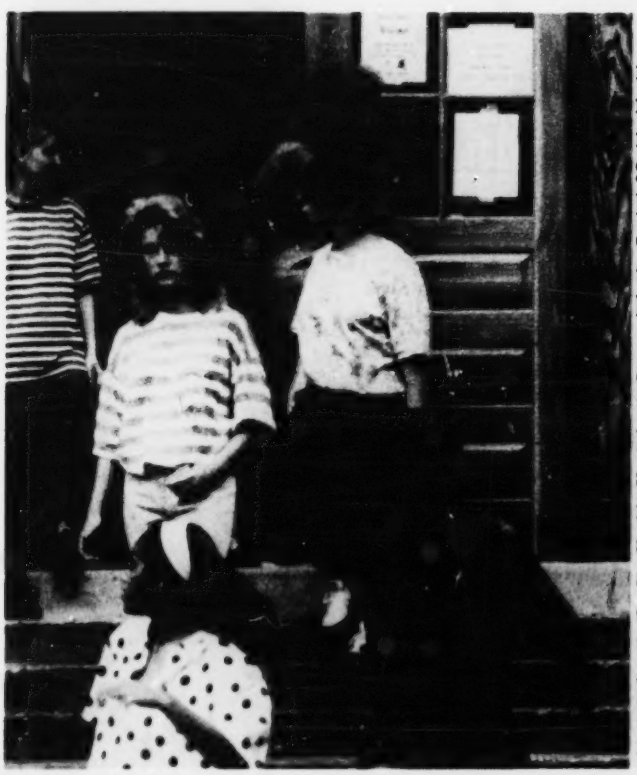
Meeting basic individual and family needs such as housing, nutrition, and health care has gained more attention recently as an educational issue. Now seen as a significant factor affecting the educational success of students, schools as outreach centers for social services are one way to help alleviate the stress and strain that families face. By giving attention and aid to families in need, there are educators and others who believe some of the obstacles that keep students from focusing on learning can be removed. IPS school #44, designated as a full-service school, is being transformed in this manner. Here in addition to education, children and their families receive emotional, social and health support services.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act, which some have looked to as a model for Indiana, called for a network of family support, health, and social service centers in or near schools. In Indianapolis, a similar school-community collaboration process is under way involving IPS, United Way, CLASS, the Marion County Commission on Youth, the city, and others. Step Ahead, a state program which would provide comprehensive services to families may also coordinate some services through schools.

Those who support this choice say that by expanding learning to encompass the entire community our schools will be relevant and education coherent. Students will acquire knowledge and skills that can be applied in the real world. They will gain a sense of how they fit into the community and what they can contribute to its growth and development. Schools that function as community resources will serve to strengthen the social and cultural integrity of the community, enhance the quality of life for families, and reinforce the sense of common identity. In this way, both our schools and our communities will benefit.

Busing

After 20 years of desegration, efforts to end court ordered busing are being considered by people who believe that busing has hurt com-



In January of 1968 the United States Department of Justice received a letter from the mother of an IPS student who felt that punishment of her child carried racial overtones. Several months earlier, at the request of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), an investigation of the school system by the Justice Department had already begun.

These and other events led to the first Indianapolis school desegregation trial in August 1971 with Federal District Court Judge S. Hugh Dillin presiding. Dillin found IPS guilty of segregation and ordered the school system to integrate Crispus Attucks, an all-Black high school, reassign students in 12 elementary schools and develop a three-year plan to desegregate 24 high schools and 108 elementary teachers. Beginning in 1973, 13,000 students were bused within IPS; and in 1981, 5,583 Black students were bused to eight of the surrounding township schools.

munities. In the words of Thomas Brown, local school board commissioner, "Busing has polarized students from parents, parents from schools, and students from the community."

When asked about neighborhood schools as a means to improve education, one IPS teacher commented on the difference between neighborhood schools and schools where kids are bused in. "Just five blocks east of the junior high school where I work is a small Catholic school of about five hundred students. It has a long history of being a neighborhood school. The community does not want to see it closed and the parents really get involved. Where I teach, there is not that sense of community involvement or pride."

Many who favor the elimination of busing see it as a necessary step to establishing and sustaining neighborhood schools. Allowing children to go to their neighborhood schools would make schools more accessible to both students and parents. The barrier of distance would be removed. Parents would have greater opportunities to get involved. The time, energy, and talents of the entire community could be better focused on improving its schools. Attention would no longer be divided between the community in which people live and the township schools their children attend. The nearly 6,000 students who are currently being bused would no longer find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings where they feel cut off from their parents and their communities.

Some people also argue that the $25 million paid last year to township schools for desegregation could be better used in IPS. More teachers or staff could be hired, educational services improved, and new initiatives implemented. Elimination of busing could help to correct what some see as a major financial disadvantage suffered by IPS.

Local Control

The IPS school system is governed by a seven-member board, one member from each of the five area districts and two at-large members. Each member represents approximately 51,000 citizens. Some people feel, however, that their voice is not being heard and that the board's actions are not communicated well enough to the public. Very few parents or ordinary citizens know how to interpret the board's policy decisions, determine whether funds are being used properly, or take part in making decisions about our schools.

A 1990 *Indianapolis News* article highlighted the concern parents have regarding participation in decision making. Parents, according to the article, were frustrated with their roles in education. Advocates for Improved Urban Education, a local group, criticized the existing format for public participation at board meetings. "They don't allow for any responses from the board. You don't know if they're shutting you out or listening." The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) also expressed dissatisfaction with the process. "The way it is set up now, any policy that goes through the board is sent to the Parent Advisory Council and we give them feedback. But we're in a passive position. Instead of being an advisory group we want to become a full collaborative partner with IPS."

Community-school councils are one avenue to involving parents and neighborhoods as full collaborative partners. Parents, business, and neighborhoods, along with the staff at individual schools would have the power to make decisions about curriculum, instructional material, hiring of teachers and principals, class assignments, pupils' schedules -- anything having to do with the operation of the school. Neighborhoods and parents would have a greater role and responsibility in educating their children.

While IPS is trying to increase community involvement through strategic planning committees and a closer relationship with the PAC, decisions for local school initiatives are still made by the board. Building-level autonomy would put neighborhoods in control of their schools and allow those closest to the problems to be directly involved in identifying and carrying out solutions. Those who favor the establishment of community-schools see building-level autonomy as an important tool for reconnecting schools and community.

What We Should Do

- Transform our schools into community centers that are places for education, cultural and recreational activities.

Mandate community service and civic participation for graduation.

Begin career education in junior high school and increase work-study programs, career counseling, and vocational training at the high school level.

Establish apprenticeship or intern training programs to give students real work experience.

Utilize schools as outreach centers for family and community access to social services.

Eliminate busing to the township schools and use the funds spent for desegregation costs to improve IPS.

Implement school-community councils with parents, businesses, the community and individual school staff empowered to make decisions about how their schools are run.

Critics of this choice see several flaws in this approach: The idea of the school as a community center ignores the reality that many inner-city communities have inadequate resources. In communities that are economically vibrant like Broad Ripple this idea may work; but in poor communities where this is not true the kind of education or services provided will continue to be limited: Although recommended as a means to help communities address their needs, unless adequate resources are made available to impoverished communities no real advantages will be gained.

Efforts to re-establish neighborhood schools are not realistic or economically feasible. A number of schools have already been torn down or sold for other uses. IPS does not have the funds to replace or to buy back these buildings and in many cases, the decrease in student population does not justify the cost.

Critics also say the harm that may be caused by eliminating busing significantly outweighs the benefits. Busing is mandated by the highest court in our nation. It would take a Supreme Court ruling to overturn it. This could require costly legal expenses and years of litigation. Furthermore, desegregation of IPS has been in place for little more than ten years. In this relatively short period of time, much has been gained in the way of racial relations. A move to end busing could jeopardize that progress. If we are not careful, we will be sanctioning a return to situations that led to the need for busing in the 1950's. Instead of moving forward we will be taking a step backwards.

With regard to local school autonomy, some people say that this could be an educational nightmare. Unless adequate resources and proper training for both building staff and community participants are provided, it will result in a proliferation of small, isolated, poorly functioning bureaucracies. By adding another level of governance it will also make it that much more difficult to monitor and enforce state and national standards.

The promise of public education is a better future for all children. To effectively educate disadvantaged children we need to renew our commitment to the principle of equity.

Public education embodies one of this country's most cherished ideals -- the right of every citizen, regardless of race, class or economic status to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. A beacon of hope for generations of poor and working class people, it has held the promise of a better future and full citizenship in a democratic society. Through education, "the great equalizer of life's circumstances," the key to unlocking the doors of opportunity and sharing in the prosperity of this land could be obtained. Today for many poor and working class people, public education is not fulfulling its promise.

Supporters of this choice say we are not truly committed to the principle of equity and this is the real challenge facing IPS. Like other large urban school systems, many of the students who come to our public schools come from impoverished homes. They are socially and economically disadvantaged. The educational resources required to effectively compensate for these circumstances are not being provided. Instead, the education received by disadvantaged students serves as little more than a revolving door allowing existing inequities to continue.

In the past, the failure of our schools to educate students had fewer consequences because there was a greater need for unskilled labor. Academic skills were not necessary to obtain a decent standard of living. But times have changed and there are fewer jobs for high school dropouts or those without basic skills. For African Americans, Hispanics and other minorities it is also true that more education is required to achieve the same goals as Whites. Thus for the poor and minorities it has become increasingly difficult to rise above conditions of social and economic disadvantage.

In Indianapolis there are approximately 125,000 people who are functionally illiterate and 65,000 who have no formal education beyond the eighth grade. For many of them poverty and deprivation have become a seemingly permanent way of life. Those who support educational equity view this as a matter of great concern. They say a society divided along the lines of rich and poor threatens the stability of this city and that public education should be used as a tool to help equalize opportunity for everyone.

Advocates of equal educational opportunity believe that with adequate resources, use of educational intervention, and the provision of support services, our schools can combat social and economic inequality. IPS can make an important difference in the lives of disadvantaged children. We should make the commitment to ensure educational equity.

Poor and disadvantaged families have fewer resources to invest in their children's development as compared to families who are

economically secure. Children from poor families are less likely to have proper nutrition or adequate medical and dental care. Many live **in sub-standard housing and may move frequently. Disadvantaged children are also less likely to have had the kinds of travel and cultural experiences that many middle class children bring with them to the classroom and that many teachers, administrators, and citizens assume most children have had.**

Because the parents of poor children often come from disadvantaged backgrounds themselves, many are unable to teach their children what they will need to know to enter school. Families of social and economic advantage tend to pass on to their children greater knowledge of the world and higher skill levels than do those who are poor. They also communicate to their children a view of the world that is much more secure and promising.

To compensate for the disparities between poor and upper or middle class children, greater resources are required to put poor children on an equal footing. If we are to achieve equal educational opportunity, our schools must bridge the gap. Equal schooling given to all children will not equalize the differences; it will merely sustain them. For public education to truly alleviate the disparities, more must be done to help the disadvantaged child catch up.

This means correcting IPS's financial problems. Last year the school system announced an expected budget deficit of $27 million in its general fund. This fund is used to pay salaries and compensation, acquire educational materials and provide programs and services. In response to this fiscal crisis, IPS laid off teachers, eliminated other staff positions and cancelled some programs. All this came at a time when the school system was being asked to add new services to comply with state regulations, facing increased costs in staff benefits and negotiating a contract with its teachers.

IPS recently suffered another series of financial setbacks. According to school officials, incentive packages offered to major corporations such as the Circle Centre Mall, United Airlines, and the AUL Building included tax abatements that undercut property tax revenues. These are revenues the school system depends on for its operating budget. In addition, the minimum 5% increase in state funds generally received by IPS will only be 2.43% in 1992-93 and 1.85% in 1993-94 due to the state's funding shortage. These cuts along with the $25 million paid by IPS and additional bonuses of between $1800 to $2500 per pupil paid by the state to the surrounding school districts for desegregation have placed IPS in a financial straitjacket.

In the words of Rodney Black, IPS' business manager, "There are some real inequities. The method of funding used by the state legislature does not define or address the needs of disadvantaged students. It's dictated from the state level down and there is no local flexibility or control. With regard to desegregation, the township schools are given more funds to educate inner-city children bused out of the IPS districts. Yet IPS deals with the same type of students, disadvantaged kids, in greater numbers, but we receive no additional funds to do the same job. This difference has largerly accounted for our teacher salaries going from the top to the bottom ranking in Marion County. This can be substantiated by comparing salaries before and since desegregation."

People who agree that IPS' financial situation needs to be addressed say existing funding disparities should be eliminated. They say we must give IPS the resources required to do an effective job. The state funding distribution system should be changed to increase funding to schools with disadvantaged children and tax abatements that take revenues away from our schools should be limited.

Educational Intervention

As classes continue to swell with children who are dealing with complex problems, the educational programs desperately needed to help them are not available. Many children still come to school unprepared to learn. More early childhood education programs, alternative schooling and intervention are required.

Teen parents need assistance as students and as parents. Programs like the Learning Center, located on the Tech High School campus, and Parents are Successful Students combine the traditional curriculum with parenting classes, career counseling, childcare assistance and pregnancy education. This kind of support can help keep teen parents in school and should be increased. Nurseries or preschools offered on the school premises should also be available, allowing teen parents to continue their education while their children receive the care and attention they need. By working both with teen parents, to improve their personal capabilities, and with their children to prepare them for learning, our schools can help break the cycle of social and economic inequity passed from one generation to the next.

Educational intervention directed at underachievers in danger of dropping out should also be increased. One tool used by our schools to help these students is Operation PASS (Positive Action for Student Success). This program for preschoolers as young as 3 through students in the 9th grade offers tutoring in reading

Children At Risk

In 1990, according to the Indianapolis Head Start administration, only 1,421 of the 11,982 children up to the age of four living below the poverty level were being served by this program. Five and six year olds are not served at all. Last year, Even Start, IPS' new family literacy program which helps parents to get their high school equivalency diploma, GED, while providing on-site preschool, served an average of 30 children.

Clearly, there are not enough programs to help all the children who need them. Head Start and similar programs have been studied and found to successfully deal with educational disadvantages and to reduce the incidence of crime, teenage pregnancy, and unemployment. The Children's Defense Fund, a national organization, estimates that for every dollar we spend on programs like Head Start we will save five dollars in future costs for welfare and remedial schooling. We must expand these programs.

Alternative education for students who are teen parents or in danger of dropping out is also needed. In 1988 1,808 babies were born to teenage mothers between the ages of 10 and 19 in Marion County. In 1991, the dropout rate for the IPS graduating class of students who entered high school in 1987 was 44.2%. For these youth, life's possibilities are bleak. Consistently in low paying jobs, frequently unemployed, and often subsisting on social welfare, dropouts represent an enormous waste of human resources. Our schools must find ways to keep these students in school.

and math, activities to improve language skills, educational field trips, personal development workshops and a host of other methods to keep these kids in school. IPS also has three alternative schools -- Horizons, Robert's Academy, and New Beginnings -- for kids designated at risk for failure. Still there are 479 at-risk students on the waiting list for services in grades K-9. Our efforts to provide educational intervention to disadvantaged children should be expanded. Our schools must do a better job of educating children who are socially and economically deprived.

Poor and minority students face obstacles that prevent them from focusing their attention on school and learning. These disadvantages pose a real threat to effective education. To overcome these obstacles, many students require professional assistance and support services.

IPS, however, does not have enough counselors, social workers or psychologists to help them. For all of IPS, there are only 52 guidance counselors. The social workers are severely overburdened, assigned to as many as 700 to 800 students. More support professionals are needed to help students deal with a variety of problems.

Disadvantaged children are also more likely to suffer from poor health and undernourishment. Proper nutrition and health care services are important. A study conducted by the Carnegie Foundation in 1988 revealed that 70% of U.S. teachers indicated this as a problem for their students. Drug and alcohol abuse among students and within their families is another area of concern. The consequences of these conditions, if neglected, often surface in other ways such as a short attention span, lack of energy or enthusiasm, disengagement, and poor or aggressive behavior. These are all problems that affect the potential for learning.

Our schools must take on a greater role in garnering or offering the needed services. Free or low cost medical and dental services should be made available to students on a regular basis. Programs that provide nutritious meals for breakfast and lunch with snacks throughout the day should be expanded. Students should have access to professional counseling, treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, personal guidance counselors, and encourage-

Headstart and other similar programs help disadvantaged children gain the skills and knowledge they need to successfully begin their education in public schools.

ment to focus on their education.

Our schools must also deal with the realities of today's children. The structure of the family and work life have changed. In most families, whether headed by a single parent, or two, the adults work and are out of the home for eight to 10 hours each day, generally between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Disadvantaged children whose parents cannot afford child care are at home alone and unsupervised for hours at a time. Our schools should adjust to today's workforce. By extending the school day or providing after school child care services, schools can offer educational enrichment or other activities that enhance growth and development.

What We Should Do

Change the state system of funding to provide more resources for disadvantaged children.

Limit local government's use of tax abatements to attract new businesses because it takes funds away from our schools.

Expand Head Start and Evenstart to help all disadvantaged children between the ages of 3 and 6 to prepare for school.

Expand innovative alternative educational programs to help students who are teen parents or in danger of dropping out stay in school. Provide on-site childcare or preschool for the children of teen parents.

Employ more social workers, counselors, tutors and other professionals to work with disadvantaged students.

Provide students with access to free or low cost medical and dental services and programs that provide adequate nutrition.

Lengthen the school day or provide afterschool child care services that offer quality supervision and educational enrichment to disadvantaged children with working parents.

What Critics Say

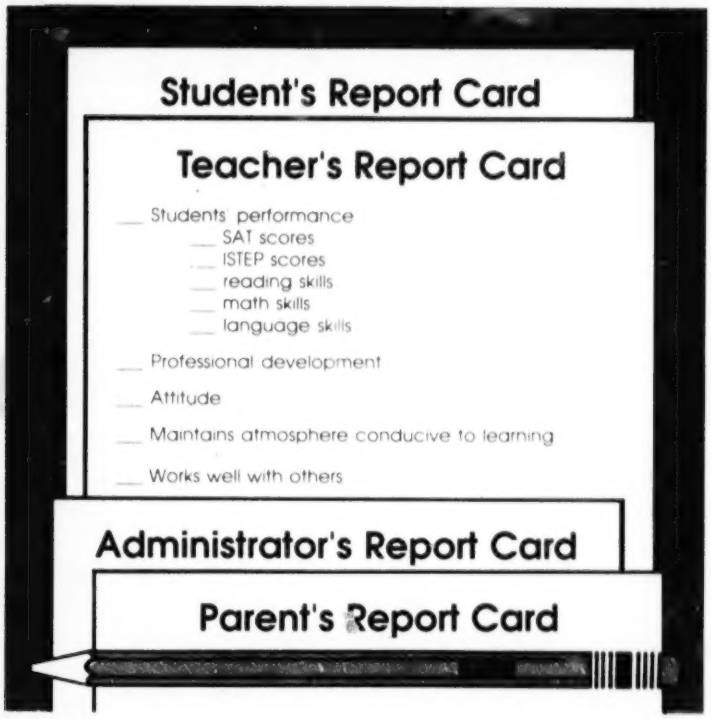
Critics of this approach see a number of serious disadvantages and say that these strategies will make matters worse.

The cry that schools suffer from inadequate funding is often heard. How do we know that this is the real problem? Some people think that what ails our schools is not due to inadequate funding but to inefficient management. This year the ratio of teachers to administrators is 9.2 to 1, a figure much lower than the student-per-teacher ratio. IPS' public relations budget is $665,783. There are those who say that if funding is truly a problem, how can the amount of spending in these areas be justified? They say what we really need is a system of accountability. Then we can determine whether a lack of resources is a major problem for our schools.

Change in the state system of funding schools might take years. To take on a challenge like this could mean legal battles, court fees, and an unsatisfactory outcome. Support of this effort might divert resources that could be used now away from our schools. Is this really what we want to do? Putting more resources into our schools might also require that we pay higher taxes to generate the necessary funds. Are we willing to do this?

There are negative consequences that may occur if we limit local government's use of tax abatements. Without tax incentives, Indianapolis may be unable to attract new businesses. This could slow or hurt economic growth and job creation. Are we prepared to sacrifice greater employment opportunities?

Lastly, to compensate for the social and economic disadvantages of poor and minority students, while admirable, is not feasible. IPS cannot effectively address the needs of these students by itself. The community must be involved. Given the limited resources of our school system, IPS' primary focus should be to improve factors that directly relate to education such as having the best qualified teachers, providing appropriate educational instruction, and curriculum content. Our schools can't do everything. IPS must be free to concentrate its time, energy, and resources on developing the knowledge and skills of our children.



Our schools are mediocre because we do not hold anyone accountable for creating successful schools. How can we expect quality in the educational system when no one assumes responsibility? Teachers, administrators, parents and students must accept their responsibility for making our schools excellent.

"Parents are not as involved as they should be."

"Teachers don't care anymore. To them its just a paycheck."

"Many administrators have no idea what really goes on in schools."

"The students don't come to learn and they don't want to work."

These are comments made by Indianapolis residents about the current condition of our public schools. Many would echo these concerns and assert that these problems have been around for years. In their view, these problems continue to exist and have worsened because our schools lack accountability.

Last year IPS spent $338 million on education. Many taxpayers feel they don't know what they're getting for the money put into schools. No one can tell them why our kids aren't graduating with the skills they need. Nor do they know whether or not teachers and administrators are actually carrying out their responsibilities effectively. And what about parents -- where is their commitment to our schools?

Those who feel this way say lack of accountability is the real reason for the mediocrity in our educational system. How can we expect quality when no one assumes responsibility for making our schools successful? Many people agree that our educational system is failing but there are not enough teachers, administrators, parents and students who see it as a problem they have a responsibility to solve.

This is the real tragedy. No one is accountable. Teachers, administrators, parents and students must become more responsible for achieving quality in our schools. Measures must be taken to gauge the effectiveness of our educators, demand higher performance from

our students, and motivate parents to take a more active role in their children's education. Until we address the lack of accountability, our schools will continue to fail because teachers, administrators, parents and students will not see excellence in our schools as something they have a responsibility to create.

Educator Effectiveness

IPS employs more than 4,900 educators, administrators and support personnel. Although our schools are performing poorly nothing really happens to teachers or administrators who are ineffective or inefficient. Neither are there any real consequences for schools that are doing badly. In fact, parents have no objective way to judge whether one school is better than another or to compare the effectiveness of teachers and administrators.

Clearly, say advocates of this choice, this situation is an example of the lack of accountability. Is it any wonder that our students fail to achieve when educators are not being held responsible for the quality of the jobs that they do? This must be changed. Teachers and administrators must be required to produce excellence.

Supporters of this view say that one way to do this would be to reduce the layers of administration. IPS now has one administrator for every 9.1 teachers. The national average is one-to-12. Those who favor eliminating some administrative positions think that teachers and principals should be in direct contact with the superintendent on a consistent basis. Removing some of the layers of administration will help this to occur.

Another means to achieve greater educator effectiveness would be to link pay and promotions to the performance of students and schools. Teachers who demonstrate outstanding performance should be rewarded. Those who perform poorly should be given opportunities to improve and if they don't they should be removed. Financial rewards should be given to schools that do well and sanctions applied to those that don't. In the state of Kentucky, this measure is now being employed to improve their schools.

IPS should also guarantee that students who graduate are competent. If they are not,

then it should be the responsibility of the schools to retrain or re-educate them. A systematic process that allows the performance of our schools to be determined by comparing them to one another and to other school systems needs to be established. This information, made available to the public along with parental freedom to select their child's school, would allow parents to make better decisions about their children's education.

It is imperative that we demand more from our educators. Minimum competency cannot be accepted. Our schools must be serious about achieving our educational goals. If we expect excellence from our students and our schools, we cannot accept less from our professionals. Our educators must lead the way.

Higher Student Performance

"In the middle of my first grade year, my family moved to Terre Haute. When I got to school down there, they were already doing cursive writing and multiplication. At the time, I felt like I was a slow learner. Now that I am older and looking back on that experience, I feel that if I had been taught better in IPS, I would not have been in such a tough position in Terre Haute. Their expectations were much higher."

This story, as told by a former IPS student, expresses the view held by many that our educational standards are too low. IPS has the lowest SAT scores in Marion County. Analysis of the figures reported to Indiana Department of Education for student performance on the 1991 Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress (ISTEP) reveals that of the 296 regular school corporations in Indiana, IPS is in the bottom 3%. Only four schools had student averages that were below that of IPS.

Those who advocate higher educational standards say our schools should focus on outcomes. They are not convinced that more money will solve our problems, nor do they think that smaller class sizes, or greater ties to the community are the most significant factors in improving student performance. They say what we need are objective standards for measuring achievement.

The general assembly addressed this concern when it passed a bill to upgrade the skills of the Hoosier workforce. This bill, which became effective July, 1992, requires that the Indiana State Board of Education adopt essential skills standards for grades 4,8, and 10 in English, language arts and mathematics. It replaces ISTEP given in grades 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9. Furthermore it requires that all students pass an exit exam in order to graduate.

Supporters of this view see such measures as a step in the right direction. They would also like our schools to eliminate social promotions because they take away the incentive for students to work harder. They favor a longer school year with more instructional days and shorter breaks to minimize what must normally be relearned after the long summer break. In their view, our standards should reflect the higher expectations of the workforce and society. As COMMIT, a statewide education coalition of business leaders, puts it, "We need a system of measuring achievement that will tell parents how well their sons and daughters are doing compared with what they need to know to get ahead. We need to set our sights higher. We need to encourage and expect excellence of our students."

Parental Involvement

Educators consistently acknowledge parental involvement as a significant factor in student success. Academic performance is linked to the emphasis parents place on education. Through their interest or participation in schools parents communicate to their children their support and enthusiasm. Unfortunately for IPS, say educators, many parents are just not involved. In the words of Solomon Edwards, a retiring teacher, "One of the biggest things missing is the cooperation between parents, students, and the teachers. We need to recapture as much of that as we can."

Advocates for increasing parental involvement believe we can recapture the cooperation of parents by giving them greater choices in the kind of education their children receive. They say that specialty schools built around what parents and kids want will bring about a dramatic change in educational quality.

Schools offering programs that are in demand can require participation from parents for their child's enrollment. This would motivate parents to be involved and help transform our schools. Teachers working with students who want to learn and bolstered by parents' support will find their jobs more rewarding. Discipline problems will decline and performance will increase as parents and students are engaged in the life of their schools. Schools will also become more responsive because they want to attract students to their programs.

IPS already gives parents the opportunity to select the school their children can attend. Through its existing Magnet and Options programs, students can take advantage of 16 programs that provide a variety of specialized courses and curriculum. This year, 4,592 students are enrolled in the programs; but demand is so great that there are not enough openings for all the students whose parents want to exercise the options. Select Schools, to be implemented in the fall of 1993, will make these choices available to more students.

Golden Rule Insurance Company, in support of parents' selection of their child's school, launched the Educational Choice Charitable Trust. The company's program, designed to run for three years, provides $1.2 million to poor parents who want to send their children to private schools. Through this initiative,

parents receive funds to cover up to half of the tuition -- a maximum of $800 per student. Since the start of the Charitable Trust in 1991, more than 800 children from low-to-moderate income families in the inner-city have been able to attend private schools. Golden Rule sees its initiative as another way to broaden the choices available to parents in educating their children. Several other Indianapolis businesses including Eli Lilly agree and have joined with Golden Rule to expand the program.

Other alternatives are also being suggested or considered. COMMIT advocates the use of public funds to let parents select any public or private school within a district for their children to attend. Governor Bayh in his Indiana 2000 Schools initiative has included optional provisions for parental freedom in selecting their child's school. This initiative, which is now being piloted, allows any school designated as an Indiana 2000 School to implement a plan that would open the school to students outside of its boundaries but within its district.

Those who support increasing parental freedom believe that a "marketplace" of schools to choose from either public, private or both will give parents greater control over their children's education. Some also see it as a way to extend the educational opportunities enjoyed by the wealthy to those with few resources. Those who favor schools of choice say all parents should have alternatives that allow them to acquire quality education for their children. They think it gives parents a reason to be involved and committed to schools.

What We Should Do

- Reduce the number of administrators putting teachers and principals in direct contact with the superintendent. Link pay and promotions of educators to students and schools performance. Remove ineffective educators who do not improve. Give financial incentives to excellent schools and place sanctions on schools that are inadequate.

- Guarantee that IPS graduates students who are competent by requiring IPS to retrain or re-educate any who are not. Establish objective standards for measuring student achievement. Eliminate social promotions, lengthen the school year, and require that students take exit exams for graduation.

Implement a systematic process for determining the performance of our schools. Compare schools within and across districts. Report results to the public.

Increase parents' freedom to choose the school their children attend by expanding programs like IPS' Magnet and Options schools, or by using public funds to allow parents to send their children to any school in Marion County.

We all want effective educators, higher student performance and increased parental commitment to our schools. But, say critics, this approach, while it promises to improve our schools, oversimplifies the problems and has too many negative consequences.

We cannot hold teachers and administrators totally responsible for the performance of students. Many of the students in IPS come to school affected by circumstances and conditions that keep them from giving their full attention to learning. These factors are beyond the control of educators. They stem from much larger societal problems and it is unfair to expect educators to solve them. While our schools do have a role in helping to address these issues, they cannot do it by themselves. Parents and the community must also do their part.

The measures proposed to achieve higher expectations and student performance could have disastrous effects. Using tests to determine student performance has serious limitations. Only those students who can demonstrate acquired knowledge and skills in this way would do well. Those who demonstrate their abilities in other ways would be defined as failures.

Lengthening the school year without improving the quality of teaching, will only give students more of what is not working. Raising educational standards with no provision for increasing remediation and enrichment to assure success would make matters worse.

Elimination of social promotions requiring children to repeat grades is judged to be more harmful than beneficial. According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals, it deprives children of age-appropriate relationships, contributes to low self-esteem, and adversely affects performance by lowering teacher expectations of students. Increasing the risk of students dropping out of school, strategies such as these virtually ensure more student failures.

Greater parental freedom to choose the school their children attend, although seen as a panacea for improving schools, could result in serious disadvantages. Unless all schools have excellent programs, quality teaching, a solid financial base, and proper planning, we will continue to have schools that are known for quality and others that are mediocre. Parents who are more active, better informed, and have the necessary resources such as transportation will place their children in the best schools. The other children will be left with the mediocre schools.

A Special Report: School Choice produced by the Carnegie Foundation in 1992, substantiates that the problem of education cannot be solved by choice alone. In districts where the best parental choice programs were observed such as Cambridge, Massachusetts; East Harlem, New York; and Montclair, New Jersey there is significant administrative and financial support. In Louisville, Kentucky each school was given $150,000 to come up with unique programs. These school systems developed and implemented their plans gradually over a period of years. School-based decision making involving parents, teachers and principals took place first with school choice occurring later. In districts where these factors are weak, school choice programs have not been enough to cause improvements in education.

Increased parental freedom in school selection could also result in resegregation by race and income. Many children who are African American or Hispanic would not benefit from school choice because they do not meet the entry requirements. This would be especially true in private schools where the option to reject a student exists. The best schools would become predominately White with mostly poor and minority children attending the inferior schools. Education would then cater to the "elite" and equity would be abandoned.

Responding to the Challenge: Searching for Solutions that Provide Quality

Education in the Indianapolis Public Schools stands at the brink of the 21st century. As we look toward the future, we must ask ourselves how we shall prepare our children to meet the challenges of this new and different world.

All is not well within our schools and we must take action. Yet, this is no simple task. The problems are complex and dynamic. Public education is a fundamental element in our community, touching the lives and interest of us all. It is key to nearly everything that we do. Because this is true, consideration of reform must involve the community in discussing this vital issue.

At the heart of this discussion is the sorting out of what we believe to be most important. We must make some hard choices. In doing this, it is our values, priorities, and principles that will guide us in making these choices. We will have to struggle with a number of compelling values and it is precisely this struggle that makes the search for solutions so difficult and public discussion so necessary. Only through public discussion in which different perspectives are examined can we begin to carefully weigh what we value most. Only through public discussion can we identify what we as a community can live with.

Many questions must be answered. What is the role of our schools in our community? Is it to provide formal learning that develops the individual child? Is it to act as a vehicle for stengthening and reinforcing community? Is it to serve as a tool for eliminating social and economic disadvantages? Or is it to develop workers who can compete in the world economy? Where does the responsibility of our schools end and that of other social institutions begin? How much can we realistically expect our schools to do? What are the real causes of the problems? How do we balance individual needs, community stability, social equity, and accountability against each other?

These are questions that we must grapple with, and we must do it together. How we go about it will be as important as what we decide to do. The issue of achieving excellence in our schools is a serious public matter and it deserves serious consideration. Informed public discussion that brings the community together to make hard choices is the first step. Through this kind of discussion, a framework for setting priorities, identifying policy directions and creating community action can emerge.

With tears in our eyes, we wave goodbye to our children on the first day of school. With them go our hopes and fears. Will they obtain the knowledge and skills they need to meet the challenges of the future?

Remember the choices!

Choice #1: Meet The Needs of Every Child

Our schools should identify and make better use of the materials, methods and conditions that help each student learn effectively.

Choice #2: Encourage Community-Schools

Our public schools are part of a larger environment where learning occurs. We need to reconnect our schools to their communities.

Choice #3: Ensure Educational Equity

The promise of public education is a better future for all children. To effectively educate disadvantaged children we need to renew our commitment to the principle of equity.

Choice #4: Establish Accountability

How can we expect quality in the educational system when no one assumes responsibility for creating successful schools? Teachers, administrators, parents and students must accept their responsibility for making our schools excellent.

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Additional Reading

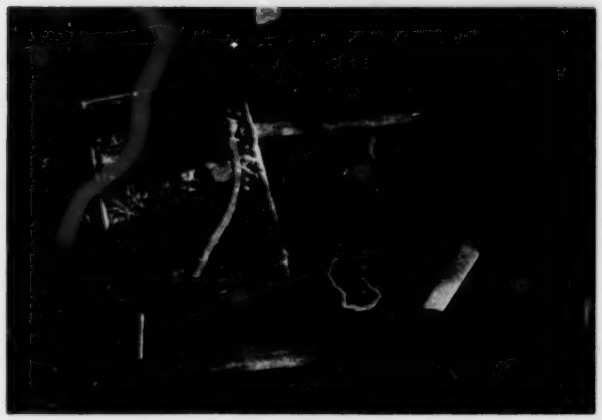
1840 -- In its constitution of 1816, Indiana became the first state to promise a school system where education would be free and open to all. However, no method for funding schools had been established. As a result, the state that first promised free schools was listed by the U.S. Census Bureau as having the highest rate of illiteracy among the northern states.

Money was not the only problem. A large group of citizens preferred private and church controlled schools. There were also those who saw no reason for educating the poorer classes. The view widely held by farmers was that all a boy needed to know was enough reading, writing, and arithmetic so that buyers did not cheat him.

Legislators were also divided on the subject. Some legislators argued that schools were a local responsibility. Others felt that more prosperous counties would be robbed of their tax dollars to support schools in poorer counties. Still others saw free schools as expensive and unaffordable because of the state's scattered population and inadequate transportation.

1846-47 -- A bill was introduced in the General Assembly to provide a city charter for Indianapolis. Representative S.V.B. Noel introduced an amendment to set up public schools and finance them with a tax of 1/8 of one percent of property assessments. Anti-school forces rallied to kill the amendment. To avoid losing the amendment, a compromise was reached to allow the Indianapolis voters to decide on a school tax in the April election.

The campaign to provide free schools in Indianapolis commanded attention all over the state. It marked the first time the school issue would be decided in a popular election. Free school supporters achieved a major victory at the ballot. Four hundred and six citizens voted yes and 29 said no. At this time, Indianapolis voters also elected their first mayor and city council. Immediately following the election, plans for the city's first public school went forward.



1852 -- State funds were available for the first time to fund public schools. The office of state superintendent of public instruction was also established.

1853 -- The Indianapolis Board of Trustees was established to adopt a grading system and standardize teaching plans and textbooks. The Board of Trustees voted to open the ward schools of Indianapolis on Monday, April 25, 1853. The accumulation of state funds and an increase in local tax revenues made possible the first free school in Indianapolis.

1853-54 -- The first city high school opened in the old Marion County Seminary building at the southwest corner of University Park. School enrollment for the grade schools was 1,160 and for the high school 115.

1854 -- The Indiana State Supreme Court ruled the right of townships to levy taxes for schools unconstitutional.

1856 -- George B. Stone, first fulltime superintendent of the Indianapolis public schools, laments their dilapidated condition.

1858 -- The Supreme Court decision of 1854 was extended to apply to city schools, closing the Indianapolis public schools.

1864 -- The Indianapolis public schools reopened during the civil war. The school board selected Professor Abraham C. Shortridge of Northwest University as local superintendent and persuaded him to come to Indianapolis.

The first high school reopened with William A. Bell as principal. Twenty-eight students would be the first class to enter high school -- none were ready for the advanced study that high school would offer.

Bell worked with them for one year and by 1865 these students had surpassed even his standards. It was said of Mr. Bell by the Indianapolis community that the good teacher had made the good school and never again would Indianapolis lack either.

1867 -- Indianapolis Normal School for training teachers was started by the Indianapolis School Board under the direction of Miss Amanda B. Funnell, a graduate of Albany, New York Normal School. She was later replaced by Mary E. Nicholson. Miss Nicholson with her dynamic personality significantly improved the training discipline at the school. She believed that schools should be inviting, lessons pleasant, and instructors should have a genuine fondness for their work.

With the leadership of Mr. Shortridge, Mr. Bell, and Miss Nicholson, Indianapolis Schools forged forward into national and international recognition.

1869 -- The first class of high school students was graduated from High School #1. The Indiana Supreme Court affirmed that Negro children did not have to be admitted to the common schools provided for White children. A separate elementary school was established for Negro children in an old school building after a new building was constructed for the White children of the town. No separate high school was provided.

1884 -- High School #2 opened at 520 Virginia Avenue.

1895 -- Manual Training High School opened at 501 South Meridian Street.

1927 -- Crispus Attucks High School opened. All Black students in Indianapolis were assigned there, no matter where they lived.

1949 -- The Indiana law establishing racially segregated schools was repealed, five years before the U.S. Supreme Court's decision declaring segregated schools by law unconstitutional. When the decision was handed down, Hoosiers saw the decision as applying only to the South where separate schools were enforced by law.

1968 -- A group of Black parents went to the U.S. Department of Justice claiming that Indianapolis was operating a segregated school system established by law. The Department of Justice agreed and filed suit in federal court in May.

1971 -- The case was assigned to Judge S. Hugh Dillin's court. The school board maintained that segregated schools were the result of housing patterns and private decisions by citizens. Judge Dillin ruled that Indianapolis had been operating a segregated school system, denying the constitutional rights of Black children. He called for a remedy to this situation.

1972 -- Indianapolis voters elected a school board committed to appealing the court's decision.

1973 -- Judge Dillin ruled that the state of Indiana is responsible for all aspects of education in the state, and thus responsible for illegal segregation of Indianapolis schools. The state was required to make the necessary changes.

1976 -- Indianapolis voters elected an IPS school board which promised to cooperate with the courts to work out an acceptable plan for desegregation.

1981 -- The busing of Black children to suburban districts began, and all schools in IPS were desegregated.

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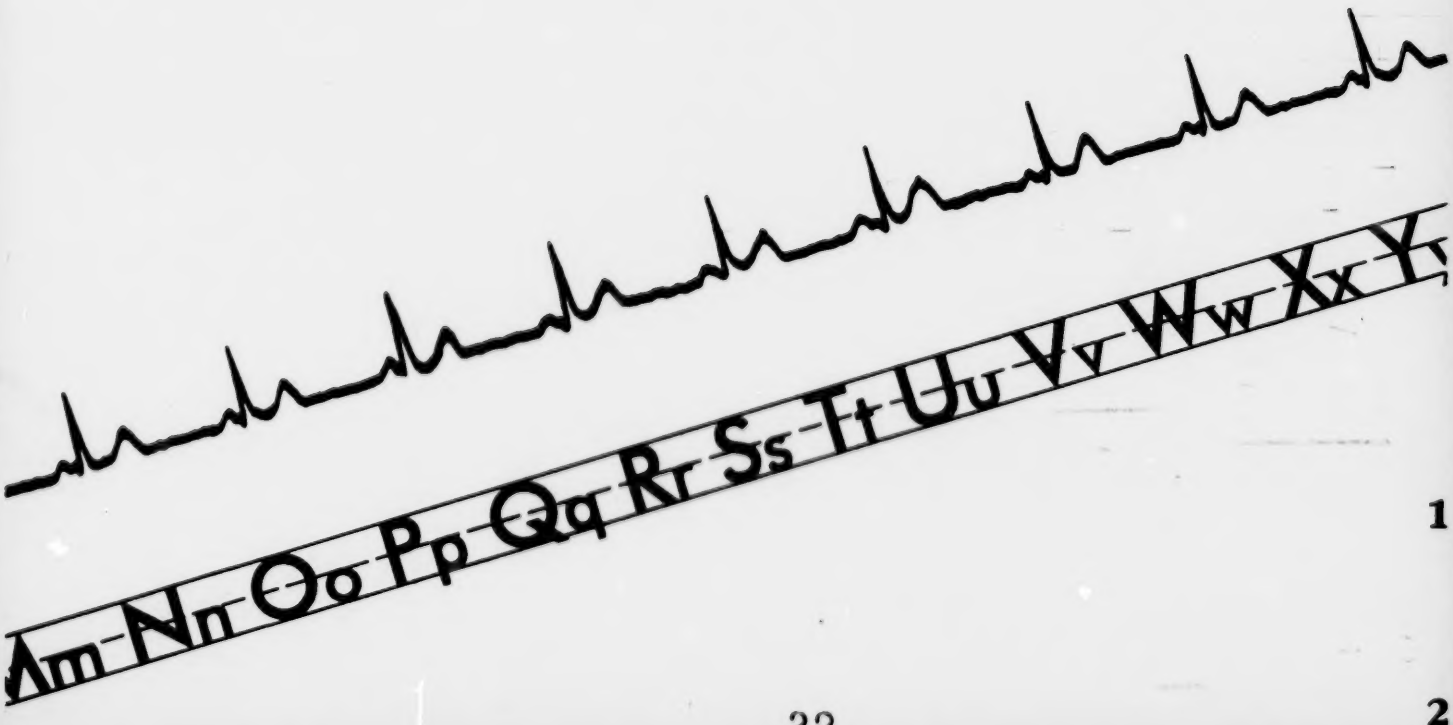
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